

Chapter 7

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

What You Will Learn

- The effects of cultural background on a person's behavior
- Key points about customs and habits
- The responsibilities of an In-Home Aide when providing care to a diverse client population

Culture and Social Behavior

As our society becomes increasingly diverse, it becomes more important to understand cultural diversity. Respecting the beliefs and social norms of people from different cultures preserves their sense of self-worth and dignity. It is important to understand the relationship between culture and social behavior when caring for a client. Information about a client's cultural beliefs, customs, and practices is part of the service plan.

A person's culture is not genetically determined; it is socially learned. Culture is passed on from generation to generation. A person's culture can affect every aspect of their life. Personal values, attitudes, religious beliefs, responses to illness and health care, relationships, behaviors, language, identity, and dietary preferences are all affected by a person's culture.

The effect of culture on people varies with their ties to that culture and the length of time they have lived in the United States. Culture is dynamic and changing as people constantly change.

Customs and Habits

Customs and habits are determined by many different things including geography (where a person lives), race, culture, and religion. Even people who have lived their entire lives in the United States will have differences. Traditionally, people from the northern part of United States tend to eat more beef, those from southern states may eat more pork, and people who live near oceans tend to eat more seafood than those who live in the plains states.

In-Home Aide's Responsibilities

There are many cultural differences among the people in our communities. When people grow up doing something in a certain way or eating certain foods, it is normal that they are most comfortable when they can continue to do those things. Accepting and appreciating the cultural beliefs of others can be enriching experiences for everyone involved.

Try to learn as much as possible about your clients' and coworkers' customs and beliefs. Review each client's service plan for information about customs and habits. Clarify any areas of concern with the supervisor or nurse before providing care to the client. Listen with respect when clients and families share information about their cultures and beliefs.

By gaining an understanding of various cultures and customs you will be better prepared to understand and communicate with a diverse population of clients. These insights will enhance communication with coworkers, clients, and their family members.

Chapter Review

1. What effect does cultural background have on a person's behavior?
2. What do you need to know about a client's customs and habits?
3. What are the responsibilities of an In-Home Aide when providing care to a diverse client population?

Student Exercise

Circle the correct answer.

1. Culture is ____.
 - a. genetically determined
 - b. taught in school
 - c. passed on from generation to generation
 - d. the same for all people regardless of their background

2. List five areas of a person's life that can be affected by his culture.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

Circle True (T) or False (F) for the following statements.

3. T / F Customs and habits are determined by many things including geography, race, culture, and religion.
4. T / F Cultures are dynamic and changing as people constantly change.
5. T / F The effect of culture is the same on all people.
6. T / F It is not necessary for the In-Home Aide to understand the culture and beliefs of her clients.
7. T / F Culture does not affect a person's decisions about health care.
8. T / F It is important to listen with respect when other people share information about their cultures and beliefs.
9. T / F Society is becoming less culturally diverse; therefore, understanding other people's beliefs is not very important.
10. T / F When people grow up doing something in a certain way; they are most comfortable when they can continue to do those things.